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THE NEW WING OF EARLY AMERICAN ART: PLAN AND ARRANGEMENT

THE new Wing of Early American Art is an interesting example of a museum building arranged for the exhibition of special material. Its final arrangement is the matured result of many years of study in conjunction with the continuous help and suggestion of its donors. Fireproof in construction, built of steel, reinforced

the west of these vestibules will be devoted to American material. From these two galleries, corridors and stairways will connect with the new wing. Thus, the material in the wing, chiefly early American decorative arts of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries will be in close conjunction with the European decorative arts shown in the Morgan Wing and, in the eventual development of the museum plan, will be placed conveniently near to the further collections of European



FAÇADE OF UNITED STATES ASSAY OFFICE, FORMERLY AT 15 WALL ST.

concrete, and brick, the new wing will uphold the high quality of permanent building methods which have been characteristic of the former additions to the Museum.

The problem of its planning presented two aspects: first, the position of the wing with relation to the general plan of the Museum; and secondly, the arrangement with regard to the early American material which it is to contain. The position as finally chosen is to the west of the north end of the Pierpont Morgan Wing. Certain new galleries will be added to the north end of this wing, from the western one of which on both first and second floors a connection will be made with the new wing. The space at present occupied by the Swiss room, and that immediately above it, will be the control vestibules for the American Wing. The large galleries to be built to

decorative arts in the future north wing of the Museum.

In its final form the new Wing of Early American Art will form the north side of a quadrangle on the south of which will perhaps be incorporated the Wentworth-Gardner house from Portsmouth, New Hampshire, purchased some years ago by the Museum. The east and west sides of this quadrangle will be formed by one-story connecting corridors against whose walls will be set Colonial doorways. The ground of the quadrangle will be treated as a Colonial garden.

The American Wing itself will contain three floors, each of which, because of comparatively low ceiling heights, is, with slight differences of floor level, accessible from the first or second floor of the Pierpont Morgan Wing extension. The plans of the

THE AMERICAN WING

three floors are similar in scheme. They include, on each floor, a large central exhibition gallery, opening on three sides into smaller rooms. The central gallery will be used for the arrangement of collections of furniture and other decorative arts grouped by material. The smaller rooms opening from this central gallery will be installed with the actual woodwork from a number of early rooms. These smaller rooms will be furnished and appointed with various articles which will contribute as

furniture and other accessories. The other rooms opening from the central gallery will have old paneling of the first half of the eighteenth century and will be furnished with the simpler furniture of the same period.

The second floor, devoted to woodwork and furniture of the middle of the eighteenth century, will exemplify the finer, more sophisticated types of interiors of the pre-Revolutionary period. The furniture of the period—principally Chippendale—



SOUTH FAÇADE, AMERICAN WING

nearly as possible toward the re-creation of the effect of a room of the period from which the woodwork dates.

It will thus be possible to show the collections both by material, with particular attention to development of styles and forms, and by period, bringing together all types of decorative art and paintings, each contributing its share to the whole effect.

Of the three floors of the building, the third floor will contain woodwork and furniture of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. In the central gallery will be arranged the earliest furniture of the Bolles Collection. Opening from the north side of this gallery will be two rooms and a small stair-hall which will reproduce interiors typical of a seventeenth-century New England house. These interiors will be furnished with appropriate articles of

glass, metalwork, and textiles will heighten the general effect of these fine rooms.

These two floors, the second and third floors of the American Wing, will be accessible from the second floor of the Pierpont Morgan Wing extension and a staircase in the new wing will connect all three of the floors within the wing itself.

The last decade of the eighteenth and the first quarter of the nineteenth century will be represented in the interior woodwork and decorative arts shown on the first floor of the building. Here the post-Chippendale furniture will be brought together, while interior woodwork of the period will exemplify rooms from Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia.

Thus, the complete route through the building from the third floor down to the first will follow the whole growth of Ameri-

can utilitarian and decorative art as well as that of interior architecture from the earliest Colonial times well into those of the Early Republic.

As part of the south façade of the wing, there will be reconstructed the marble front of the United States Branch Bank, familiarly known as the old United States Assay Office, which was formerly at 15 Wall Street, where the new Assay Office now stands. This fine façade has been preserved for the purpose through the efforts of Mr. de Forest. Its design, illustrated in this number of the BULLETIN, is dominated by the central bay, in which an applied tetrastyle Ionic colonnade resting upon a rusticated basement supports an entablature and pediment. This central bay is flanked with simpler bays carrying out the divisions of basement story, main story, and entablature. The material is Westchester marble, which just at the time of its erection was coming into popular use in New York architecture.

C. O. C.

EARLY AMERICAN ROOMS IN THE MUSEUM

THE charm of early American interior architecture in its symmetry of form and purity and variety of decorative motives has been little known to any but those who have sought it out on our highways and byways. It has never been seriously considered as one of our national assets, nor have our great museums until lately done anything to call to mind this delightful feature of early American life.

In 1909 the Art Committee of the Hudson-Fulton Celebration in New York, of which Robert W. de Forest was chairman, determined to illustrate the Fulton side of this celebration by the exhibition of early American furniture and household art. They reached this conclusion not only because of its appropriateness to the occasion, but in order to test by actual experiment whether such a collection furnished a proper line of development for an American art museum.

The demonstration was complete. This revelation of the excellence of our early

American craftsmanship excited widespread interest and decided the authorities of the Metropolitan Museum to enter upon a program of building up a strong department of American art in its various phases and manifestations. The first step in carrying out this program was the acquisition, by the generous gift of Mrs. Russell Sage, of the Bolles Collection of American furniture, which had formed an important part of the Hudson-Fulton exhibit.

The next Museum problem was the installation of its constantly growing collection of American art. Lack of room prevented the immediate display of any great portion of it. The attempt to show even a part of it in any of our existing large galleries made it plain that it could not be so shown to advantage unless perhaps some of these galleries were subdivided into small rooms. Museum galleries, as a rule, are absolutely unfitted for the proper installation of much of that early American industrial art which, if shown in sympathetic surroundings, reflects a peculiar atmosphere of delightful simplicity not found in the furnishings of the baronial homes of the old world. Twelve years ago, in discussing plans for the proper development of this new department of American art, it was determined that the only adequate solution of the problem of installation would be a separate building in which the various articles of our early pictorial and industrial art could be framed, so to speak, and shown in the environment for which they were designed and made. This solution, ideal but visionary as it seemed at the time, is about to be attained through the gift of President and Mrs. Robert W. de Forest.

The desirability of gathering together, if possible, a series of early American rooms was immediately recognized and the quest begun. In a dozen years this has resulted in the acquisition of fifteen rooms fairly representative of the various periods of our architecture along the Atlantic seaboard. The difficulties in our way have been great. Material which had withstood the ravages of demolition and fire and which could be purchased seemed almost unobtainable. The Museum has studiously refrained from the purchase of any room or building which